

ARE YOU AMERICA'S NEXT TOP TERRORIST? FIND OUT, page 6

THE INDYPENDENT

ISSUE #112, NOVEMBER 15 - DECEMBER 5, 2007
A FREE PAPER FOR FREE PEOPLE

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WHAT IS INDYMEDIA?

With autonomous chapters in more than 150 cities throughout the world, the Independent Media Center (IMC) is an international network of volunteer media activists.

The IMC seeks to create a new media ethic by providing progressive, in-depth and accurate coverage of issues. We are a community-based organization using media to facilitate political and cultural self-representation. We seek to analyze issues affecting individuals, communities and ecosystems by providing media tools and space to those seeking to communicate. We espouse open dialogue and placing the means of communication and creativity back in the hands of the people, away from the drive of profit.

The Indydependent is funded by benefits, subscriptions, donations, grants and ads from organizations and individuals with similar missions.

WHAT CAN I DO TO GET INVOLVED?

The IMC has an open door. You can write and distribute for *The Indydependent*, videotape events and rallies, update the website, self-publish articles to the web, take photos or just help us run the office. As an organization relying on volunteer support, we encourage all forms of participation.

The print team reserves the right to edit articles for length, content and clarity. We welcome your participation in the editorial process.

VOLUNTEER STAFF:

Sam Alcoff, Nicholas Allanach, Chris Anderson, Steven Arnerich, Eleanor J. Bader, Kazembe Balagun, Charlie Bass, Bennett J. Baumer, Lani Bouwer, Jed Brandt, Mike Burke, José Carmona, Kepfram Cauley, Matt Cavanaugh, Rahul Chadha, Susan Chenelle, Kristina Cyr, Ellen Davidson, Ryan Dunsmuir, Jeff Faerber, Renee Feltz, Leo Garcia, Anna Gold, Samantha Gorelick, Liana Grey, A.K. Gupta, Mary Heglar, Irina Ivanova, Alex Kane, Ruth Kelton, Jessica Lee, Jennifer Lew, Samantha Lewis, Virginia Lora, Gary Martin, Clark Merrefield, Ari Moore, Nik Moore, Ana Nogueira, John O'Hagan, Donald Paneth, Cat Perry, Louis Peterson, Nicholas Powers, Frank Reynoso, Anna Robinson-Sweet, Jeremy Scabill, Ann Schneider, Andrew Stern, Sarah Stuterville, Caroline Sykora, Gabriella Szpun, John Tarleton, Xavier Tayo, Erin Thompson, Dana Vindigni, Eric Volpe, Steven Wishnia, Amy Wolf and Rusty Zimmerman.

community calendar

Please send event announcements to indyevents@gmail.com.

The next editorial meeting for The Indydependent is Tuesday, Nov. 20, 7 pm, at 4 West 43rd St, Suite 311. All are welcome.

ONGOING THRU DEC 6

2-10pm M-F • \$10 Suggested
ART CENSORSHIP: AN EXHIBITION BENEFITTING ARTISTS IN DISTRESS.
Arts orgs L2EL ARTS and freeDimensional bring together 27 international and local artists who have endured severe political reprisals.

The Brecht Forum, 451 West St (btw Bank & Bethune) • bretchforum.org

SUN NOV 18

3pm • \$10 Admission
POETRY READING: ANI DIFRANCO—A CONVERSATION ON VERSES.
Enjoy an engaging conversation between Ani DiFranco and T Cooper about music, prose, resolve, solitude, politics and love. Benefit for Bluestockings.
Judson Memorial Church, 55 Wash Sq South • bluestockings.com

MON NOV 19

7pm • \$5 Suggested
DISCUSSION: GLOBAL WARMING, GLOBAL JUSTICE. With Larry Lohmann on false market-based approaches —widely touted as the solution to a variety of environmental problems —such as the trading of carbon dioxide emissions to control global warming. Bluestockings, 172 Allen St (at Stanton) bluestockings.com

TUES NOV 20

6:30pm • \$10; Student/Senior \$8
FILM: FOR THE RECORD—THE WORLD TRIBUNAL ON IRAQ documents the culminating session of this tribunal of conscience and its innovative organizing process, bringing out the inspiration and hope that it holds for the peace movement. Followed by Q&A with directors. Cantor Film Center, NYU, 36 East 8 St 212-998-4100

THURS NOV 22

12pm • Free
ACTION: 38TH NATIONAL DAY OF MOURNING. Join Native American activists, learn the real history of Thanksgiving, dedicate the day to Native political prisoner Leonard Peltier. Coles' Hill, Plymouth, MA. United American Indians of New England: uaine.org
Buses from NYC: Int'l Action Center 212-633-6646 • iacenter.org

FRI NOV 23

12:01am-11:59pm
BUY NOTHING DAY! Protest U.S. consumer and material culture by not buying anything on the day after Thanksgiving, the biggest shopping day of the year.

All day

ACTION: TAKE THE BLACK OUT OF BLACK FRIDAY. National campaign encourages Blacks to refrain from shopping on Buy Nothing Day to protest the national surge in racist attacks. Sponsored by the Dec. 12th Movement • 718-398-1766

SAT-MON NOV 24-26

10am-4pm, 4-7pm on Mon • Free
RECYCLE: COMPUTER AND ELECTRONICS RECYCLING
Sponsored by the Lower East Side Ecology Center.

Habana Outpost, 757 Fulton St (at S Portland Ave), Brooklyn leseologycenter.org

TUES NOV 27

6:30-8pm • \$12/\$8
DISCUSSION: THE OVERSUCCESSFUL CITY. The economic logic of development today & the regulatory climate in which it occurs seem to favor high-density, high-revenue developments. NY Times Stage Auditorium, 620 Eighth Ave • RSVP: 212-935-2075 rsvp@mas.org • futureofny.org

6:30-8:30pm • Free

DISCUSSION: DIALOGUES ON POLITICS OF IMMIGRATION
With Jane Guskin & David Wilson, authors of *The Politics of Immigration: Questions & Answers*. Lower East Side Tenement Museum Shop, 108 Orchard St (at Delancey St) RSVP requested: events@tenement.org 212-982-8420 • tenement.org

7:30pm • \$6/\$10/\$15 Suggested

DISCUSSION: ROOTS OF CONFLICT BTW ISRAEL & PALESTINE & PROSPECTS FOR PEACE w/ Norman Finkelstein, author of *Holocaust Industry* and *Beyond Chutzpah*, and Charles Glass, chief ME correspondent for ABC News 1983-93. Judson Memorial Church, 55 Wash Sq South • 212-242-4201 • bretchforum.org

6-9pm • \$10 Advance purchase

BENEFIT: MILITARY FAMILIES SPEAK OUT. National organization of 3,700 families related to soldiers in current wars. Call for end of war & fair treatment of soldiers at home. Holy Name of Jesus Roman Catholic Church, 207 W 96th St (btw B'way & Amsterdam Ave) • 646-262-8578 Tickets: mfso@mfso.org

6-8pm • Free (w/ Metrocard)

EVENT: FIERCE FRIDAY PRESENTS COMMUNITY SPEAKOUT! Meet and eat with other LGBT youth to discuss what changes need to be made and working solutions to better serve the LGBT community. FIERCE, 147 W 24th St, 6th floor 646-336-6789

NOV-DEC



FRIDAY NOVEMBER 30

6-8 pm • FREE
THE IMPORTANCE OF INDEPENDENT MEDIA — *THE INDYDEPENDENT SPEAKS UP*. Hunter College North Building, Room 543 695 Park Avenue 212-221-0521

WED NOV 28

7pm • \$5 Suggested
FILM: NGATAHI—KNOW THE LINKS #3. A documentary chronicling intersections of hip hop & street art among indigenous activists & marginalized peoples in 20 countries. Bluestockings, 72 Allen St (at Stanton) 212-777-6028 • bluestockings.com

FRI NOV 30

6-9pm • \$10 Advance purchase
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SAT DEC 1

10am-6pm • Free
CONFERENCE: QUEER CUNY VIII — THE TWILIGHT OF QUEERNESS? Keynote speaker Lisa Duggan, author of *Sapphic Slashers: Sex, Violence and American Modernity* and *Twilight of Equality: Neoliberalism, Cultural Politics and the Attack on Democracy*. Hunter College West Lobby, 695 Park Ave Contact: Taylor, QueerCUNY@gmail.com

7:30pm • \$3; \$8 for dinner at 6:30pm
DISCUSSION: CHE GUEVARA — IRREPRESSIBLE REVOLUTIONARY Honoring Guevara's life on the 40th anniversary of his death in Bolivia. Freedom Hall, 113 W 128th St (btw Amsterdam Ave & 125th St) Malcolm X & Adam Clayton Powell Blvd • 212-222-0633 • socialism.com

FRI DEC 7

5:30pm • Free
DISCUSSION: IRAN-US RELATIONS — ON THE BRINK OF DISASTER? NYC college professors examine history of relations & likelihood of U.S. military intervention & means for its avoidance. The New School, Swayduck Auditorium, 65 Fifth Ave (btw 13th & 14th Sts) Petra4i@yahoo.com

Next Issue: December 6

reader comments

SUBMIT COMMENTS TO THE STORIES YOU READ ONLINE AT INDYPENDENT.ORG.

MILITARIZED ZONE

Response to "Inside the Border Crisis: Migrants Risk Death to Cross an Increasingly Perilous Frontier," Oct. 26

Every day that I drive on the road from Arivaca to Tucson [in Arizona], I am surrounded by U.S. Border Patrol vehicles. There is always at least one vehicle, and often several, that will follow me, checking my license plate or looking for signs of illegal activity. They follow me closely, then fall back and then another will come along and repeat it. It feels oppressive, but what is the alternative? Is the alternative worse? Is it worth the oppression I feel? Once again, there are so many variables that affect this situation.

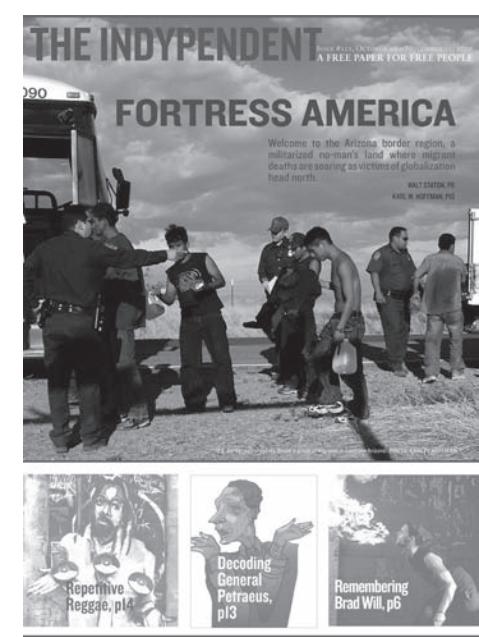
—CHRIS

NO TAXES FOR WAR

Response to "Why I'm a War Tax Resister," Oct. 26

I'm thrilled to read about this. I've been resisting taxes as well, but in a different way. I just keep my wages in the lowest income bracket, and this way I only owe Social Security and not any federal income taxes. Not everyone can do this, but if you think outside of the box, don't have too many pressing responsibilities and don't mind stepping outside your comfort zone, it's possible. For those who may get money taken out of their bank accounts, I wonder if it is possible to "give" that account to a trusted friend or family member, so that the account isn't in your name and technically isn't your money, although there is an agreement between you and your friend that it is your money, and therefore you still have access to it.

—FELLOW RESISTER



**THE
PEOPLE'S
LAWYER**

a project of the
National Lawyers Guild NYC

Fake ID?

BY ANN SCHNEIDER

There's more than meets the eye with Gov. Elliot Spitzer's recent U-turn on granting driver's licenses to undocumented immigrants. Lost in the media-driven furor is that while Spitzer's original goal was quite modest, his capitulation has actually made a bad situation worse.

The long arc of driver's license reform began in the 1990s when many states began issuing licenses to people who had forms of identification that did not include a Social Security number.

For example, prior to Sept. 11, the state of New York accepted a foreign passport as proof of identity for a driver's license. Spitzer's goal was simply to reverse the 2002 decision of his predecessor Gov. George Pataki to require immigrants prove they were legal residents before obtaining a driver's license.

Spitzer's plan was propelled by the recognition there are up to 1 million undocumented immigrants living in the state, and that many of them have to either drive to get to work or as a part of their jobs. State officials felt it was more prudent to train and test drivers, than to have thousands of unlicensed, uninsured drivers on the road.

North Carolina, for one, is the only state on the East Coast that currently grants driver's licenses to those whose legal status is undetermined; that may be why it has the lowest rate of uninsured drivers in the country.

Despite the practical benefits of Spitzer's plan, it was attacked by opponents of immigrant rights as well as Homeland Security Secretary Michael Chertoff. On Oct. 26 Spitzer jettisoned his reform effort in favor of a three-tiered license plan that further marginalizes undocumented immigrants.

Under the new plan, one category of licenses would meet strict federal requirements and be available to legal residents and citizens. A second would cater to upstate residents who travel across the Canadian border frequently. A third type would permit undocumented immigrants to drive legally but will be stamped "not for federal purposes."

It seems to have escaped Spitzer's notice that such a blatantly segregated system is hardly inviting to undocumented immigrants. Worse, his decision makes New York only the

fourth state to agree to come into compliance with the Real ID Act of 2005.

Piggybacking on a supplemental funding bill for the Iraq War, the Real ID Act was passed by Congress without a single hearing.

It essentially creates a national identity card for the first time in U.S. history, as it requires states to verify the "issuance, validity and completeness" of every document presented in order to obtain a driver's license.

Future licenses are supposed to have a "machine-readable zone" allowing them to be swiped at airports, federal facilities and anywhere else authorities choose to mandate. It will set up a national database containing Social Security numbers and birth certificate information readily accessible to state and federal agencies. Privacy advocates call Real ID "one-stop shopping for identity thieves."

Security experts are divided on the usefulness of Real ID. The Sept. 11 Commission did not recommend that states require proof of legal status before issuing a license, as the Sept. 11 hijackers entered the country with valid visas and obtained drivers licenses under their own names.

The Department of Homeland Security's estimates that it will cost states at least \$23 billion to implement Real ID by its final 2013 deadline. Much of the costs will likely be passed along through higher driver's license fees. Seven states have passed laws against implementing Real ID, and an additional 10 state legislatures have approved resolutions calling on Congress to repeal the act.

Thanks to Spitzer, New York now joins Washington, Arizona and Vermont as the only states that have agreed to come into compliance with Real ID.

In the end, the governor has done nothing to make us more secure either on the roads or in the skies. Instead, he has managed to both perpetuate discrimination and give credibility to one of the Bush administration's most dubious initiatives.

[Editor's Note: As *The Indypendent* goes to press, Spitzer appears to be making another U-turn on the issue. The governor is taking a "wait-and-see" approach to offering Real ID licenses and may begin moving to oppose the controversial federal program.



THE FACE BEHIND THE EMAIL: New York activist David Wilson leads the effort to compile a list of events for the Activist Calendar, an online comprehensive resource for progressive and cultural happenings in the city, which is emailed out weekly. Sign up at nycalendar.org. PHOTO: K. CYR

Listing the NY Left

BY ALEX KANE

From upcoming pickets by striking workers, and rallies for universal health care or affordable housing to freegan workshops and announcements about progressive film showings, readings, or good old antiwar protests, the New York City Activist and Protest Calendars have become indispensable resources for many in New York's progressive circles.

Both calendars provide some of the only near-comprehensive coverage of New York's upcoming progressive events. "I think the government and various opponents go through a great deal of effort to make sure we are divided and at each other's throats, and it's probably in the best interest of people to counteract that. The calendar is one way to do that," said Todd Eaton, who moderates the Protest Calendar and hopes the calendar helps create a "cross-factional, multi-issue place where people have the option of taking a look at what other groups are doing."

While the two online listservs have become a mainstay for many activists, the calendars are put together without much fanfare by only a handful of dedicated volunteers. "It's all a hobby from my Brooklyn home on a cheap desktop PC with 26Kb dialup internet," said Eaton. "I've accepted maybe \$20 in donations over the last few years from one non-stranger benefactor, but have no income or fundraising."

David Wilson, who has worked with the Nicaragua Solidarity Network since 1987, heads up the task of putting together the weekly Activist Calendar. According to Wilson, the calendar came out of discussions with peace and Latin American solidarity groups, who were scheduling conflicting events on the same topic. In response, Wilson helped get out the first incarnation of the calendar during the first Persian Gulf War in 1991. In the pre-internet age, the calendar was disseminated via phone messages. "After the first couple of weeks it turned into a five-minute tape," said Wilson.

Four years later, today's online version of the calendar was created. The information for the different events, such as rallies, protests or talks, comes from people sending them directly to the calendar or from subscriptions to online listservs.

Compiling the calendar can be a difficult task with few volunteers and many events. Four volunteers are responsible for adding an average of 50 new items to the calendar a week. "We try to give priority to events from the underrepresented communities," said Wilson. "But with our limited finances and a limited number of volunteers, we have to rely on help from the activist community to do this — by activists passing on events from the underrepresented communities, spreading the word about the calendar and encouraging people to send their events."

However, the good news is that compared to several years ago, traffic to both listservs has increased significantly. For example, at Todd Eaton's NY Protest list, the number of events from February 2006 to October 2007 increased threefold. Over a nine-day sample in February, there was an average of 7.3 posts per day, whereas in October there was an average of 25.1 posts per day. "The volume of posts is way up, and the number of street actions and talks have clearly increased," Eaton said.

"It's a fair number of events for a movement that we're continually told is marginalized," Wilson said.

To sign up for the Activist Calendar: nycalendar.org

To sign up for the Protest Calendar: snipurl.com/nypost

Harlem Marches on Columbia

Residents of West Harlem were joined by the Student Coalition on Expansion and Gentrification Nov. 10 to protest Columbia University's plan to expand into the nearby neighborhood. The rally began with remarks from members of Develop Don't Destroy Brooklyn, the Mirabal Sisters and the Harlem Tenants Council, who all face threats of losing their homes. Brooklyn's Rude Mechanical Orchestra led more than 80 protesters across campus to the front steps of Columbia President Lee Bollinger's residence where the crowd cheered, "Harlem is not for sale!"



PHOTO AND CAPTION: K. CYR

Students Give School Big Brother Bronx Cheer

BY RENEE FELTZ

When 13-year-old Chelsea Fraser wrote the word "okay" on her desk at Kyker Heights Intermediate School in April, she was arrested, handcuffed and placed in the back of a police car, according to news reports.

Arrests like this ignite outrage among teenage members of a South Bronx-based youth leadership program called Youth on the Move because of the heavy-handed tactics used by school security agents in New York City's public schools.

"We talked about how they treat us like prisoners instead of students," said Davon Montgomery, 16, a junior at Frederick Douglass Academy.

Montgomery and his peers spent their summer videotaping interviews with students about the roughly 4,500 school security agents who patrol the halls and monitor metal detectors as unarmed employees of the New York Police Department. They produced a video called, "Our Schools: Safe or Not?" and have begun using it as a tool to change how agents interact with students.

In the video, Montgomery said agents fail to make his school safer. "Students don't care if there is a school security agent. They'll still fight," he said.

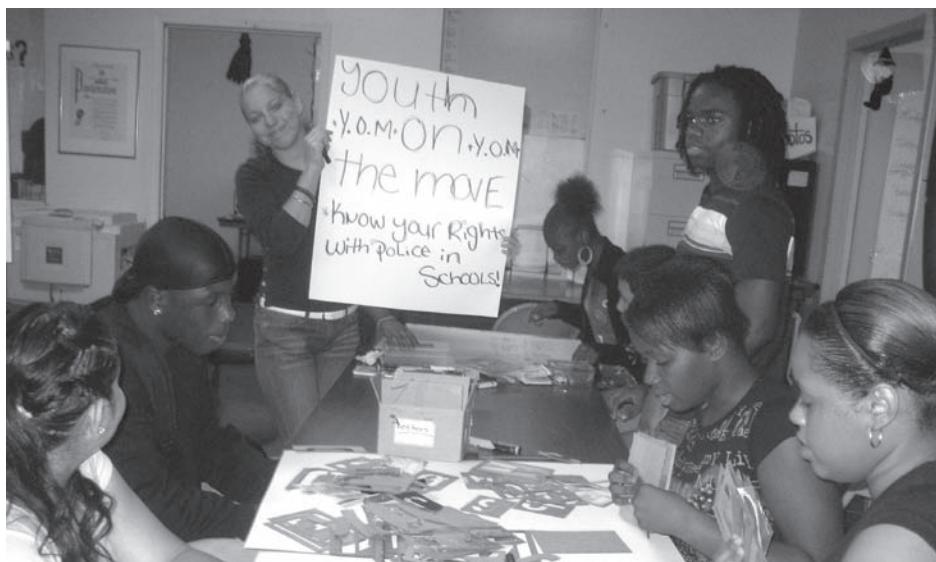
Two Youth on the Move members showed the video in October to tenth-graders at Bronx Guild High School, where students pass each morning through a metal detector.

"We're here to talk to you guys about a safety campaign," said Shantell Peterkin, 17, a junior at the school and former Youth on the Move intern.

Peterkin dimmed the lights, pushed play, and chatter from students in the back of the classroom continued until hip hop music began playing behind the opening credits.

About halfway through the video, a question appeared on the screen: "Do metal detectors make you feel safe?" Only one of the six interviewees answered yes. One student urged his peers to tell officials they don't want detectors in their schools.

The video drew positive responses from the class. Students related most strongly to the day-to-day feeling of being treated like criminals.



JUST SAY NO: Bronx high school students are demanding changes to how the NYPD polices city schools.

PHOTO: RENEE FELTZ

Jesus Cepeda, 15, raised his hand and described a weekly ritual of having his bag of football practice clothes searched each time he returns on Monday after washing them over the weekend.

"They take everything out of it," Cepeda said. "Then I have to put everything back in."

All agents undergo a comprehensive 14-week training on bullying, conflict resolution and discipline in the classroom, according to a letter from Police Commissioner Raymond Kelly to City Councilman Robert Jackson, chair of the Education Committee.

Police took over responsibility for school safety in 1996 after an investigatory commission created by former Mayor Rudolph Giuliani concluded the New York City Board of Education's Division of School Safety had failed to maintain security.

The thousands of agents, and at least 200 armed police officers assigned to especially dangerous schools, amount to the fifth-largest police force in the country, according to the New York Civil Liberties Union's (NYCLU) March 2007 report, "Criminalizing the Classroom."

The video may be the only public record of how students feel about this force.

"The youth are the ones who really know what is happening in the schools," said

Chloe Dugger, field organizer for the NYCLU's Police Accountability Project.

Dugger said that is why the NYCLU supplied Youth on the Move with cameras to make the 4-minute film in July during three workshop sessions with a documentary filmmaker.

While students are heavily affected by the agents, Dugger said they have no way to file a complaint if an agent behaves abusively or inappropriately.

Students showed the video to City Councilperson Maria del Carmen Arroyo (D-South Bronx) in August and asked her to support school arrests as a last resort.

"Teachers don't see themselves as vehicles for conflict resolution," said Arroyo, who called the video a work in progress. "Maybe one strategy that can come out of this conversation is how to make teachers feel more comfortable in that role."

Youth on the Move has plans to continue showing the "Our Schools: Safe or Not?" video in more classrooms this year.

"The message is there's a problem with school safety," said Montgomery, "and we want it to be changed."

For more about Youth on the Move, see mothersonthemove/yom.html or call 718-842-2224.

NYC School Security by the Numbers

3,200 Number of school safety personnel when NYPD took over school security in 1998

4,800+ Number of School Security Agents (SSAs) in New York's public schools as of 2005

200 Number of armed police officers in New York high schools

5 Ranking of the NYPD's school security force compared to other police forces in the United States.

93,000 Number of predominantly Black and Latino New York public school students who have to pass through metal detectors on a daily basis to enter school

88 Number of New York high schools and middle schools where students have to go through metal detectors on a daily basis to enter school

82 Percentage of Black and Latino students at high schools with permanent metal detectors

71 Percentage of Black and Latino students enrolled at high schools citywide

\$11,282 Average annual funding per pupil at high schools citywide

\$9,601 Average annual funding per pupil at high schools with permanent metal detectors

\$8,066 Average annual funding per pupil at high schools with more than 3,000 students and permanent metal detectors

80 Percentage of the state's prison population that consists of Blacks and Latinos from 10 New York City neighborhoods

—JOHN TARLETON

Sources: Criminalizing the Classroom, March 2007, nyclu.org; New York Civil Liberties Union press conference, October 2007; Community Service Society, cssny.org.

LOOK WHO'S MOBILIZING AT CUNY



Faced with months of tough bargaining, members of the City University of New York Professional Staff Congress (PSC), convened an Oct. 30 meeting at Cooper Union that drew 900 participants. PSC, which represents CUNY's nearly 20,000 faculty and professional staff members, saw its current contract expire on Sept. 19 without CUNY's administration making a financial offer.

PHOTO: GARY SCHOCHEC/PSC

WHERE DO I GET MY COPY OF THE INDYPENDENT?

A FREE PAPER FOR FREE PEOPLE

Below 14th St.

Bluestockings
172 Allen St.

Times Up!
49 E. Houston

Housing Works
126 Crosby St.

Mercer St. Books
206 Mercer

MUD
307 E. 9th St.

LES Credit Union
37 Ave. B

Kim's Video
6 St. Mark's Place

Brecht Forum
451 West St.

The New School
(Student Lounge)
55 W. 13th St.

Theater for the
New City
155 First Ave.

14th To 96th St.

Manhattan Neighborhood Network
537 W. 59th St.

Housing Conservation Coordinators
777 Tenth Ave.

Revolution Books
9 W. 19th St.

BAM
30 Lafayette Ave.

Chelsea Sq. Restaurant
23rd & Ninth Ave.

Vox Pop
1022 Cortelyou Rd.

Tillie's of Brooklyn
248 DeKalb Ave.

Kim's Video
114th St. & Broadway

Labyrinth Books
536 W. 112th St.

Riverside Church
121st St. & Claremont

Harlem Tenant Council
26 Edgecombe Ave.

Ozzie's Coffee Shop
249 5th Ave.

Veggie Castle
2242 Church Ave.

Tea Lounge
Union St. & 7th Ave.

9th St. & 7th Ave.

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Veggie

Protesting Priests Penned

BY AMANDA SHAUGER

TUCSON, Ariz.—Two Catholic priests received five-month prison sentences Oct. 17 for illegally entering a U.S. Army base in southern Arizona to protest the military's use of torture.

During a Nov. 19, 2006 demonstration at Fort Huachuca, Ariz., home to the U.S. Army Intelligence Center, the Rev. Steve Kelly, 58, and the Rev. Louis Vitale, 75, entered the base to deliver a letter to Maj. Gen. Barbara Fast



GARY MARTIN

denouncing the use of torture, which they believe is being taught at the base. Kelly and Vitale had gathered with more than 100 people at the base in solidarity with the annual U.S. School of the Americas (SOA) protest at Fort Benning, Ga.

"We will keep trying to stop the teaching and practice of torture whether we are sent to jail or not," Kelly said from the steps of the courthouse prior to his sentencing. "We

others by SOA graduates. The annual Fort Benning protest, which draws thousands of demonstrators to SOA/WHINSEC, is scheduled for Nov. 16-18. Demonstrators in Arizona are planning to hold a fourth annual solidarity demonstration Nov. 18, across the street from Fort Huachuca.

For more, visit soaw.org.

Antiwar H.S. Students Stand Up

In a victory for grassroots antiwar forces, administration officials at a suburban Chicago high school dropped expulsion threats leveled against students who staged an on-campus antiwar demonstration. The turnaround by Morton West High School Superintendent Ben Nowakowski came on Nov. 13, following two weeks of protest by Chicago peace, social justice and civil rights organizations.

The turmoil at Morton West began on Nov. 1, when, in response to the presence of military recruiters on campus, approximately 60 students began a peaceful sit-in outside the school. Administrators accused the students of "gross disobedience and mob activity," resulting in 10-day suspensions and possible expulsions for two dozen students.

"We weren't violent in any way," Jonathon Acevedo told the Chicago Tribune. "We were holding hands and singing 'Kumbaya' and the song 'Give Peace a Chance.'" Acevedo had

been one of the students facing the threat of expulsion.

"This entire incident is outrageous. The school missed out on a wonderful teachable moment," said Rita Maniotis, president of the Parent Teacher Organization and the mother of a disciplined student, during a Nov. 7 district meeting. "Instead, they cracked down on them right away and turned it into a punitive situation." Parents and students had also accused the administration of doling out lighter punishments to athletes and those with higher GPAs.

Following the Nov. 7 meeting, pressure on the district increased, and was capped by a large antiwar rally on Nov. 12 outside the school. According to Morton West parent Pam Winstead, suspended students have been meeting to make plans to continue their protest and educate the student body about the war. Several students will speak at an Iraq Moratorium rally in Chicago on Friday, Nov. 16.

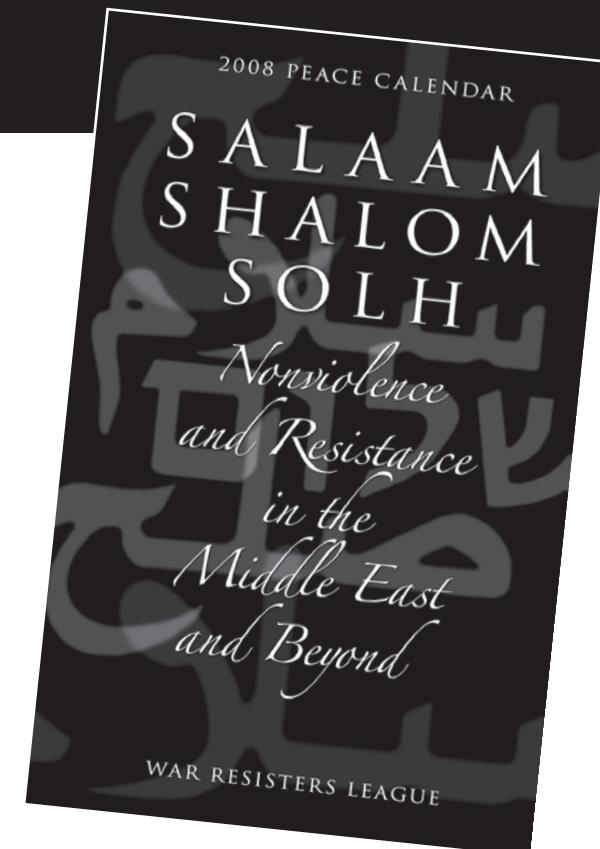
Olympia Antiwar Activists Block Military Shipments (Again)

For the third time in two years, dozens of members of the Olympia Port Militarization Resistance put their bodies in front of trucks in order to halt the traffic of military equipment between the United States and Iraq. On Nov. 7, approximately 100 antiwar demonstrators began a blockade at the Port of Olympia, Wash., to prevent the return of U.S. military hardware and Stryker vehicles used in Iraq. The shipment, support equipment for the U.S. Army 3rd Brigade, 2nd Infantry Division, was set to be transported from the port back to Fort Lewis. After a three-day standoff, on Sat. Nov. 10, police officers in riot gear pepper-sprayed and hit demonstrators with batons before firing rubber bullets in the crowd, arresting 13 people near the port entrance. In defiance, approximately 10 protesters locked arms in PVC pipes and sat down in the street leading to the interstate highway, partially blocking military shipments. Eventually, police officers sawed through the pipes and dragged the activists to a patrol vehicle. More information, omjp.org and seattle.indymedia.org. PHOTO: ROBERT WHITLOCK



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Edited by Jim Haber, Foreword by Kathy Kelly

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Bringing the War on Terrorism Home

BY JESSICA LEE

Under the guise of a bill that calls for the study of "homegrown terrorism," Congress is apparently trying to broaden the definition of terrorism to encompass both First Amendment political activity and traditional forms of protest such as nonviolent civil disobedience, according to civil liberties advocates, scholars and historians.

The proposed law, The Violent Radicalization and Homegrown Terrorism Prevention Act of 2007 (H.R. 1955), was passed by the House of Representative in a 404-6 vote on Oct. 23. (The Senate is currently considering a companion bill, S. 1959.) The act would establish a "National Commission on the prevention of violent radicalization and ideologically based violence" and an university-based "Center for Excellence" to "examine and report upon the facts and causes of violent radicalization, homegrown terrorism and ideologically based violence in the United States" in order to develop policy for "prevention, disruption and mitigation."

Many observers fear that the proposed law will be used against U.S.-based groups engaged in legal but unpopular political activism, ranging from political Islamists to animal-rights and environmental campaigners to radical right-wing organizations. There is concern, too, that the bill will undermine academic integrity and is the latest salvo in a decade-long government grab for power at the expense of civil liberties.

David Price, a professor of anthropology at St. Martin's University who studies government surveillance and harassment of dissident scholars, says the bill "is a shot over the bow of environmental activists, animal-rights activists, anti-globalization activists and scholars who are working in the Middle East who have views that go against the administration." Price says some right-wing outfits such as gun clubs are also threatened because "[they] would be looked at with suspicion under the bill."

The Bill of Rights Defense Committee (BORDC) — which has been organizing against post-Sept. 11 legislative attacks on First Amendment rights — is critical of the bill. "When you first look at this bill, it might seem harmless because it is about the development of a commission to do a study," explained Hope Marston, a regional organizer with BORDC.

"However, when you realize the focus of

the study is 'homegrown terrorism,' it raises red flags," Marston said. "When you consider that the government has wiretapped our phone calls and emails, spied on religious and political groups and has done extensive data mining of our daily records, it is worrisome of what might be done with the study. It is clear that the study would be on religious and political groups, and violate our First Amendment rights to free speech and freedoms of religion and association."

One pressing concern is definitions contained in the bill. For example, "violent radicalization" is defined as "the process of adopting or promoting an extremist belief system for the purpose of facilitating ideologically based violence to advance political, religious, or social change."

Alejandro Queral, executive director of the Northwest Constitutional Rights Center, asks, "What is an extremist belief system? Who defines this? These are broad definitions that encompass so much. ... It is criminalizing thought and ideology."

For her part, Marston takes issue with the definition of homegrown terrorism. "It is not necessarily about violence. It is about the 'use, planned use, or threatened use, of force or violence' to intimidate or coerce the government. This is often the language that refers to political activity."

Congressional sponsors of the bill claim it is limited in scope. "Though not a silver bullet, the legislation will help the nation develop a better understanding of the forces that lead to homegrown terrorism, and the steps we can take to stop it," said Rep. Jane Harman (D-Calif.) Oct. 23, who co-authored the bill. "Free speech, espousing even very radical beliefs, is protected by our Constitution — but violent behavior is not."

The bill's purpose goes beyond academic inquiry, however. In a press release dated Nov. 6, Harman stated: "the National Commission [will] propose to both Congress and [Department of Homeland Security Secretary Michael] Chertoff initiatives to intercede before radicalized individuals turn violent." (Harman's office refused three separate inquiries by *The Independent* for comment.)

Some assert this would allow law enforcement agencies to target radicals in general. Price says, "This bill is trying to bridge the gap between those with radical dissenting views and those who engage in violent acts. It's a form of prior restraint."

Price explains how this may work, citing an example in his home town of Olympia,

Wash., where a peaceful blockade took place in early November at the Port of Olympia to prevent the shipment of war materials between the United States and Iraq. He says, "It will be these types of things that will start getting defined as terrorism, including Quakers and indigenous rights' campaigns."

Kamau Franklin, an attorney with the Center for Constitutional Rights (CCR), is also concerned at the targeting of peaceful protests. He says the "Commission's broad mandate can lead to the ability to turn civil disobedience, a form of protest that is centuries old, into a terrorist act." It's possible, he says, "that someone who would have been charged with disorderly conduct or obstruction of governmental administration may soon be charged with a federal terrorist statute."

THE THREAT (OR LACK THEREOF)

Although the legislation is vague, a chief target appears to be Islamic militants living in the United States. Harman, in her Nov. 6 press release, says the bill is needed to combat violent radicalization and cites four cases as examples of such — all of them involving Muslim Americans allegedly engaged in terrorist activity. The bill's language also states that proposed appointees to the National Commission should have "expertise and experience" in a long list of disciplines such as "world religions." But the only religion named is Islam.

The bill appears to be influenced by the government-affiliated RAND Corporation, whose website includes a letter from Harman noting, "RAND ... and I have worked closely for many years." Harman, who

"Homegrown terrorism is the principal threat that we face as a country and it will likely be the principal threat that we face for decades. Unless a way of intervening in the radicalization process can be found, we are condemned to stepping on cockroaches one at a time."

—Brian Michael Jenkins, RAND Corporation

"My biggest fear is that they [the commission] will call for some new criminal penalties and federal crimes," says Franklin. "Activists are nervous about how the broad definitions could be used for criminalizing civil disobedience and squashing the momentum of the left."

The bill provides a list of Congressional findings, including a failure to understand the development and promotion of "violent radicalization, homegrown terrorism and ideologically based violence," which is argued to pose a threat to domestic security. The Internet was highlighted as a tool in "providing access to broad and constant streams of terrorist-related propaganda to United States citizens."

The Congressional Budget Office estimates that the bill would cost \$22 million over four years.

chairs the House Subcommittee on Intelligence, Information Sharing and Terrorism Risk Assessment, introduced H.R. 1955 on April 19, 2007.

Two weeks prior to this, Brian Michael Jenkins of RAND delivered testimony on "Jihadist Radicalization and Recruitment" to Harman's subcommittee. Jenkins claimed "radicalization and recruiting are taking place in the United States," and listed a number of high-profile cases in which Muslim Americans have been arrested on terrorism-related charges.

In his testimony, Jenkins admitted convictions in these cases — in Lackawanna, N.Y., Northern Virginia, New York City, Portland, Ore., and elsewhere — relied on charges being "interpreted broadly" by the courts. There has also been significant criticism of many of these cases for a lack of

History's 'Terrorists'

BY CHRIS ANDERSON

U.S. history is generally portrayed as a steady, peaceful and inevitable unfolding of freedom, guided by benevolent statesmen and the invisible hand of the market. It is easy to forget that social and economic progress has repeatedly been won in this country through extra-legal actions that shook the status quo and confronted power holders with broad-based movements for change that could not easily be denied.

Here are some American icons who might have been tagged as "domestic terrorists" if the "Violent Radicalization and Homegrown Terrorism Prevention Act of 2007" had been law during their time:

The Sons of Liberty:

Remembered today as some of the United States' foremost Founding Fathers, the colonial "Sons of Liberty" did not shrink from engaging in politically motivated property destruction to make a point. Prominent members included Patrick Henry, John Hancock, John and Samuel Adams and Paul Revere. Best known for orchestrating the Boston Tea Party, the Sons of Liberty also tarred and feathered Tories and attacked the governor's mansion in New York City. "If ye love wealth greater than liberty," said Samuel Adams, "go home from us in peace. We seek not your counsel, nor your arms. Crouch down and lick the hand that feeds you; and may posterity forget that ye were our countrymen."



Harriet Tubman:

After using the Underground Railroad's network of safe houses to escape from slavery in Maryland, Tubman herself became committed to helping other Blacks flee to safety in the North, eventually rescuing 115 African-Americans. Although the Underground Railroad was primarily a clandestine rather than military organization, it operated in direct violation of the 1850 Fugitive Slave law, and Tubman's forays into the south were often described as "raids" or "expeditions."



CONGRESS CONSIDERS HOW TO 'DISRUPT' RADICAL MOVEMENTS IN THE UNITED STATES

any actual plans or means to commit a violent act or the use of government informants who goaded the suspects into committing illegal acts.

In June, Jenkins was back before Harman's subcommittee discussing the role of the National Commission. According to the Congressional Quarterly website, Jenkins said, "[Homegrown terrorism] is the principal threat that we face as a country and it will likely be the principal threat that we face for decades." The website stated, "Unless a way of intervening in the radicalization process can be found, 'we are condemned to stepping on cockroaches one at a time,' he added."

At the end of his second round of testimony, Jenkins undercut the claims that there is a real danger requiring the creation of the National Commission and Center for Excellence. He said, "Judging by the terrorist conspiracies uncovered since 9/11, violent radicalization has yielded very few recruits. Indeed, the level of terrorist activities in the United States was much higher in the 1970s than it is today." (Repeated inquiries by *The Independent* to RAND to interview Jenkins or other staff analysts were turned down by the media relations department, which claimed they were all unavailable for the rest of the year.)

This has the Arab-American community worried. "When you look at the creation of the Commission, it is scary, especially when people [on the national commission] will be appointed by the White House," said Karen Shora, executive director of the American-Arab Anti-Discrimination Committee (ADC). He pointed to the recess appointment, despite widespread criticism, of Daniel Pipes to the U.S. Institute of Peace in 2003, who, Shora said, "propagated hate against Arabs."

Shora is worried H.R. 1955 will unfairly target Muslims, even though he says they have been largely helpful in

terrorist investigations since Sept. 11. Despite the assistance, he says civil rights abuses continue to occur, including "voluntary interviews," the Ab-

sconder Apprehension Initiative and the Special Registration Program.

Continued on Page 10



Emma Goldman:

Although the U.S. government attempted to link her to the shooting of industrialist Henry Clay Frick and the assassination of President William McKinley, the anarchist labor organizer, instigator of free love, defender of women's rights and journalist was ultimately deported from the United States for her writings and activism. In 1917, she was arrested for violating the 1917 Espionage Act for publishing an article, "Why You Shouldn't Go To War," in the April issue of *Mother Earth*. For nearly a decade prior to her deportation, Goldman had been in much demand as a lecturer in New York and around the country, inspiring fervent working-class activism and clashes between her critics and supporters in equal measure.



Flint Sit-Down Strikers:

Thousands of General Motors autoworkers occupied two GM factories during a 44-day strike, which began Dec. 30, 1936. Sit-down strikes followed at other GM plants in Ohio and Indiana. When police later tried to remove workers from inside one of the Flint auto plants, they were repulsed by fire hoses and a barrage of car door hinges. The strike ended with the company recognizing the United Auto Workers union as the workers' sole bargaining representative. The victory set the stage for organizing industrial workers across the United States.



Who's a Terrorist Now?

BY ANN SCHNEIDER

While architects of The Violent Radicalization and Homegrown Terrorism Prevention Act of 2007 downplay this legislation as merely an attempt to research and better understand terrorism, those concerned about civil liberties should take note of how vaguely worded anti-terrorism legislation can be put to unanticipated uses.

Edgar Morales, a Mexican immigrant, admits he is a member of a Bronx-based gang, the St. James Boys. But, is he a terrorist? According to Bronx District Attorney Robert Johnson, he is. Robert, who was just re-elected to his fifth, 4-year term, charged him with "terrorism" for his role in the shooting death of a 10-year old girl at a christening party in 2002.

His conviction last month represents the first time a jury has applied the New York Anti-Terrorism Act of 2001, adopted by the New York legislature only five days after the Sept. 11 attacks. Borrowing language from the federal Patriot Act, the law made it a Class A felony, punishable by 25 years to life, to use force with the intention to "intimidate or coerce a civilian population; influence the policy of a unit of government by intimidation or coercion; or affect the conduct of a unit of government by murder, assassination or kidnapping." For Morales, the charge will enhance his conviction on charges of manslaughter and attempted murder.

Assembly Speaker Sheldon Silver said he supported the bill purely to show bipartisan support for the executive in the aftermath of the attacks. "Is it overkill?" he was asked after the bill passed in 2001. "It may very well be overkill, but at this time I think it's important to show the unity of our purpose and not question political motives."

To be sure, it was only the Sept. 11 attacks that permitted the passage of this law. Former Governor George Pataki asked for such a bill in June 2001 but was rejected by Democrats who said the federal law against material support for terrorism was enough. Asked about its use to convict Morales, the bill's sponsor Nassau Senator Michael Balboni called it an "unanticipated application."

But, the use of state anti-terrorism laws to add years to gang members' sentences is thoroughly predictable. These laws are the result of some very politically astute lawyers who saw the events of Sept. 11 as a chance to repeal restraint on federal and local intelligence-gathering operations. On the morning of the Sept. 11 attacks, former Attorney General John Ashcroft's team of Federalist Society lawyers began writing up their prosecutor's wish list to loosen warrant requirements, broaden the scope of investigation, permit infiltration of mosques, among other things. By Sept. 19, the team had produced a forty-page draft that would later become the USA Patriot Act of 2001.

History should make us very skeptical of legislators who want to appear tough on crime. Their target is often the Bill of Rights. Edgar Morales is not an innocent victim. But, if he can be classified as a terrorist, we should ask ourselves who else might also be called one?

Martin Luther King Jr. and the Civil Rights Movement:

Although King and others in the early Civil Rights movement are lauded today as "apostles of nonviolence," their tactics were more than just symbolic. Through sit-ins, boycotts and mass protests they sought to force change in state policy by imposing a social cost on local and national governments. By the time of his death in 1968, King was organizing a multi-racial Poor People's March on Washington that was intended to besiege the nation's capital for months with thousands of nonviolent protesters who

would try to shut down roads, bridges and key government facilities until the government ended the Vietnam War and re-invested resources in anti-poverty programs. "Timid supplication for justice will not solve the problem," King said at the time. "We've got to confront the power structure massively."

RENT WARS OF EAST HARLEM

Smashing Neoliberalism One Piñata at a Time

BY INDEPENDENT STAFF

Movement for Justice in El Barrio (MJB) began in 2004 with informal meetings in the lobbies of five apartment buildings where the group's 20 original members lived. It has grown steadily over the past three years and now has almost 400 members sprinkled across 26 buildings in East Harlem. Inspired by the Zapatistas, a grassroots rebel group in southern Mexico, MJB engages in a consensual politics of listening and dialogue where leaders are expected to do as the membership tells them to.

"As an organization that works for the community, it has to do what the community says," said Oscar Dominguez, who has been a member since 2005.

On Nov. 21, MJB brought together at least 15 different anti-gentrification groups from throughout the city in an *encuentro* (or "gathering") that provided a chance to listen, reflect upon and celebrate one another's work. Observers from groups based in Rhode Island, Connecticut, New Jersey and Pennsylvania also attended.

The result was a multi-lingual, multi-media evening of sharing hope and resistance in the struggle against gentrification. Representatives of city community organizing groups—including CAAAV: Organizing Asian Communities, FIERCE, and Housing Here and Now—described their specific campaigns, general struggles and dreams for the future.

MJB has long been part of the local-global justice movement through its alliance with the Zapatistas, Dominguez said, although they are just beginning to expand their anti-gentrification battle internationally. The "enemy behind gentrification is neoliberalism," Dominguez said. "It makes victims out of all of us who are different... And what's happening to us here is happening all over the world to many people."

The *encuentro* was not an entirely somber affair. Activists from Make the Road New York put on a series of funny skits, rousing songs and chants which brought the crowd to its feet. The program also featured film footage from CAAAV's Chinatown campaign, from MJB's "mega-march" this August, and from the Zapatistas' reclamation of their land from a Mexican army base.

The day ended with a procession of MJB members' children lining up to smash a piñata symbolizing gentrification and neoliberalism.



THE COMMUNITY TAKES A STAND: Oscar Dominguez, Ana Laura Merino, Juan Haro and Georgina Quiroz (left to right) are just a few of the members of Movement for Justice in El Barrio battling gentrification in East Harlem. PHOTO: K. CYR

BY ANDALUSIA KNOLL

When Ricardo Ramón and Natalia Evangelista immigrated to the United States from Santa Inez, a small, arid farming town in the southern Mexican state of Puebla, they didn't imagine that they would be fighting displacement again. "We have the same problems we left in Mexico," said Ramon. "There, they fight for a place to live. Here, we do the same."

Ramón, 25, and Evangelista, 23, are just two of about 380 tenants, organized with the Movement for Justice in El Barrio (MJB), who are fighting off efforts by their new landlord to evict tenants from 47 rent-stabilized and rent-controlled buildings in East Harlem, also known as El Barrio.

Since the 47 buildings were bought by Dawnay, Day Group, a privately owned British bank that manages \$10 billion in worldwide assets and has real-estate holdings in Europe, India and Australia, tenants have faced widespread harassment and have been falsely charged for services that they never received.

In response, MJB, a Zapatista-inspired organizing model (see sidebar) that has taken root in East Harlem over the last five years,

has begun a battle to save one of the last bastions of affordable housing in Manhattan. It's trying to stop "landlords, the government, and their culture of money," from displacing people of color and low-income residents under the guise of "development."

"Their dream is that we leave the building and go away," said Ramón, who earns \$1,800 a month working as a cook, out of which he pays \$874 in rent and helps support Evangelista and their two small children. If Dawnay, Day gets the rent increases it seeks, their family and most of the other tenants will be forced out. Ramón says they love living in El Barrio and "would like to stay here for many years. Our dream is that our children remain here, go to school, graduate and enter a profession."

"Their goal is to make more money each day and that the poor stay poor," said Evangelista.

DIRTY TRICKS TO EVICT TENANTS

One of numerous foreign investors who have been recently attracted to the New York City real-estate market, Dawnay, Day spent close to \$250 million in March on buildings north and east of Central Park from East 100th to East 120th streets, containing 1,137 apartments and 55 commercial spaces.

Residents been subject to accusations of overcrowding apartments, asked to pay imaginary legal fees Dawnay, Day has claimed are owed to the former landlord and been offered money to leave.

"They know that we are people with little resources and they take advantage of us. They wouldn't do this to people who have lots of money. They just want to kick us out so that they can fix these apartments up a little, bring in new richer people, and charge higher rents," says Josefina Salazar, a Dawnay, Day tenant and MJB member.

Dawnay, Day's objectives were clear: Push out the current rent-regulated tenants, renovate the buildings and raise rents. "East Harlem is the last area of the whole of Manhattan being gentrified," Phil Blakely, Dawnay, Day's director, speculated in *The Times* (London). He likened purchasing property in East Harlem to buying real estate in Brixton, a London neighborhood — once the heart of the city's Afro-Caribbean immigrant culture — whose recent gentrification has led to sharp rent increases.

"A typical two-bedroom flat taking \$150 per month in rent can see the rents rise 3 percent to 4 percent each year without doing anything," Blakely told *The Times* (London). "As soon as you take vacant possession, the rents will typically rise 17 percent when re-let without doing anything. But with renovation, a flat could well take \$1,700 a month once re-let on the open market." He estimated that once the East Harlem apartments were renovated and rented at market rates, the value of the properties would increase from the purchase price of \$280 per square foot to more than \$1,000 per square foot.

To do this, Dawnay, Day can take advantage of the loopholes the state has drilled into its rent regulations over the last 15 years. In New York City, about 1 million apartments, in buildings containing six or more units which were built before 1974, are rent-stabilized, with maximum annual rent increases set by the city Rent Guidelines Board. (About 43,000 apartments, mainly occupied by elderly people who have lived there since 1971, are protected by the older rent-control system, but are usually subject to 7.5 percent annual increases.) But for vacant apartments, landlords are automatically allowed to hike the price by 20 percent. If they renovate, they can add 1/40 of the cost to the rent.

Many landlords routinely flout even these limits. If they get the rent to \$2,000 or more, the apartment is deregulated, which means that the owners can charge whatever they can get, and the tenants have no right to renew their lease when it expires.

Using tactics that have become increasingly common in the last 10 years, Dawnay, Day has been harassing its tenants and charging them for repairs that never took place, in an effort to push the rent-regulated residents out.

Zoila Jara, a single mother of two who has lived on East 106th Street for 13 years, says the company falsely charged her for \$1,495. "Dawnay Day claims that some of this is for a washer they say they gave me. The fact is I do not have and never had a washer," she said. "On top of this, for every month that goes by that I refuse to pay, they add false late fees."

The company has also refused to make much-needed emergency repairs, according to an August article published by the *Daily News*. Tenant Cristina Ortega reported two separate incidents in which Dawnay, Day failed to do repairs after pieces of her ceiling fell, injuring her two teenage daughters. "I notified HPD," she told the *News*. "They have done nothing."

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NEW LANDLORD, BIGGER FIGHT

Tenants say that Stephen Kessner, the previous landlord of the 47 buildings, used similar tactics. But instead, they evicted him from East Harlem to buy real estate in Brixton, a London neighborhood — once the heart of the city's Afro-Caribbean immigrant culture — whose recent gentrification has led to sharp rent increases.

"When one person goes to Housing Court alone it doesn't work. Having many people in court together is what carried the day," said Evan-



TAKING ON GOLIATH: Natalia Evangelista and Ricardo Ramón, with 3-year-old daughter Abigail, are two of hundreds of El Barrio residents fighting eviction efforts by corporate landlord Dawnay, Day. PHOTO: K. CYR

It Takes a Village to Raise Hell

Natalia Evangelista, Ricardo Ramón, and their daughter Abigail are part of a larger community fighting against corporate landlord Dawnay, Day. They are shown here at a table, working on a puzzle together.

erything that makes us El Barrio."

Just as Dawnay, Day crosses borders in search of capital gains, MJB will soon cross the Atlantic to meet with anti-gentrification groups in London to challenge the company at its global headquarters.

They will also be organizing with groups nationwide by conducting a workshop "Organizing Across Borders for Humanity and Against Neoliberalism" at an immigrant rights conference in Texas and a National Organizers Gathering in Maryland. With this multi-pronged approach, MJB members are confident that they will kick Dawnay, Day out of El Barrio.

"We are not going to leave. We're gonna fight to the end for our children," says MJB member Paula Serrano.

John Tarleton contributed to this report.



Out with the Poor, In with the Rich

BY STEVEN WISHNIA

If the city government devoted as much energy to enforcing the laws against rent-gouging as it does to arresting 40,000 pot-smokers a year, New Yorkers would have a much easier time finding housing they can afford.

The majority of rents charged for vacant apartments are illegally high, according to many housing activists. Landlords, who are entitled to add 1/40th of the cost of renovations to the rent, can game the system by inflating the cost of the work they did. Or they simply charge whatever they can get, figuring that most tenants don't know they can contest illegal overcharges or don't want to spend years dealing with the state housing agency's bureaucracy. If the rent is \$2,000 a month or more when the tenants move in, the apartment is deregulated, which means the tenants have so few rights that they'd probably be evicted before their complaint is resolved.

The problem is that the city government can't enforce the law against illegal rent overcharges. Under the Urstadt law, a state law enacted in 1971 as part of then-Gov. Nelson Rockefeller's short-lived and disastrous elimination of rent controls on vacant apartments, the city can't pass any rent regulations stronger than the state's. Thus, when the state dramatically weakened rent stabilization in 1997, easing evictions and allowing 20 percent increases on vacant apartments, and former Governor George Pataki had the state housing agency virtually stop enforcing the law against rent-gouging, the city government was powerless.

The Urstadt law will not be repealed as long as upstate and suburban Republicans—who take tons of money from city landlords, are generally ideologically sympathetic to the rich, and have few or no rent-regulated tenants in their districts—control the state Senate. But the Democrats may not be much help either. Gov. Eliot Spitzer has made some moves to improve the state housing agency's policies, but has opposed repealing the Urstadt law.

Combined with the city's overheated real-estate market, the weakening of the rent laws has created massive opportunities for speculators. Major investors have moved in, such as Extell and Apollo Real Estate. The \$5.4 billion sale of Stuyvesant Town/Peter Cooper Village last year got the most publicity, but in April seven former Mitchell-Lama middle-income developments in Harlem, East Harlem and Roosevelt Island, sold for \$940 million.

Spending that much means that the only profitable business model requires ousting the current tenants—by legal or illegal means. The Pinnacle Group, now facing federal racketeering charges, bought up 25,000 apartments and tried to evict 5,000 tenants on dubious grounds, while Laurence Gluck's Stellar Management specializes in taking Mitchell-Lama buildings out of the program. Smaller operators prowl the fringes of gentrification, harassing working-class, Black, and Latino tenants out.

A legislative agenda for making New York City housing genuinely affordable would include repealing the Urstadt law, vigorously enforcing the laws against rent-gouging, eliminating the decontrol of apartments that rent for \$2,000 or more, and freezing or rolling back rents. It would also require building massive amounts of new housing that's genuinely affordable. Though most people would define "affordable" as something related to how much people actually make, the Bloomberg administration has redefined it as merely less than market rate—and the formulas used for determining "middle income" and "low income" are based on the median income for the metropolitan area, about \$70,000 a year, instead of the city median of about \$41,500. Thus, an apartment that rents for \$2,100 a month can be classified "middle-income."

So far this year, the tenant movement has gotten the city to begin cracking down on landlords who illegally convert single-room residential hotels to tourist hotels, and an anti-harassment bill is pending in the City Council. But a further-reaching agenda won't be accomplished without a much more massive movement. To be effective, demonstrations need to be much bigger than they've been, and community groups will have to demand that all or most new housing built be affordable, instead of it containing token amounts such as 30 percent or less. As for direct action, rent strikes are difficult to organize and put tenants at risk of losing their homes—but they're the most direct way of putting a wooden shoe in the real-estate machine.

KEEPING A CLOSE EYE ON ‘RADICAL DISSENT’

Continued from Page 7

MAPPING MUSLIMS

The passage of the Homegrown Terrorism Prevention Act coincided with a furor over the Los Angeles Police Department’s plan to “map” Muslim communities in the city. Appearing before the U.S. Senate Committee on Homeland Security on Oct. 30, Michael Downing, the assistant commanding officer of LAPD’s Counter-terrorism/Criminal Intelligence Bureau, said the project “will lay out the geographic locations of the many different Muslim population groups around Los Angeles [and] take a deeper look at their history, demographics, language, culture, ethnic breakdown, socio-economic status and social interactions.”

Shora says, “Looking at a community based on religious affiliation alone ... is unconstitutional. The ADC added in a press release that singling “out individuals for investigation, surveillance, and data collection based solely on religion ... would violate equal protection and burden the free exercise of religion.”

The LAPD envisions using academics in its mapping program. It reportedly “intends to have the data assembled by the University of Southern California’s Center for Risk and Economic Analysis.” Recruiting academics for counterterrorism efforts is also at the heart of H.R. 1955, which proposes a university-based “Center of Excellence.”

TARGET ‘ANTI-GLOBALISTS’

Islamic militants are not the only threat on the government’s radar. “A chief problem is radical forms of Islam, but we’re not only studying radical Islam,” Harman told *In These Times*, a Chicago-based newsmagazine. “We’re studying the phenomenon of people with radical beliefs who turn into people who would use violence.”

In 2004, the FBI named “eco-terrorism,” a broad term that includes property destruction, the top domestic threat. The July 2007 National Intelligence Estimate found that “special interest groups” were also likely to cause small-scale violent attacks.

These “special interest groups” were outlined in a 2005 RAND report, “Trends in Terrorism.” One chapter was devoted to a non-Muslim “homegrown terrorist” threat — anti-globalists. “Anti-globalists directly challenge the intrinsic qualities of capitalism, charging that in the insatiable quest for growth and profit, the philosophy is serving to destroy the world’s ecology, indigenous cultures and individual welfare,” stated the report. The report identifies right-wing movements such as neo-Nazis as threats and states there should be a focus on anarchist and radical environmental groups.

A WAR OF WORDS

Observers say using vaguely defined terms is part of a historical pattern of sweeping government repression that includes the post-World War II “Red Scare” and Cointelpro. They are also concerned that H.R. 1955 will foster a legislative momentum on criminalizing a broad range of dissident voices.

Jules Boykoff, an assistant professor of politics and government at Pacific University and author of *Beyond Bullets: The Suppression of Dissent in the United States*, said he was alarmed that “violence” was not defined. He noted the definition of “ideologically based violence” is the “means to use, planned use, or threatened use of force or violence by a group or individual to promote the group or individual’s political, religious, or social beliefs.”

“It is a circular definition, what does that mean?” asked Boykoff, while reading the bill aloud. “What does violence mean?

We do not need laws like this because we already have plenty of laws on the books that make it a crime to blow up or set fire to buildings. It is called arson.”

Boykoff commented that the bill used the terms “extremism” and “radicalism” interchangeably. “The word ‘radical’ shares the etymological root to the word ‘radish,’ which means to get to the root of the problem. So, if the government wants to get at the actual root of terrorism, then let’s really talk about it. We need to talk about the economic roots, the vast inequalities in wealth between the rich and poor.” Boykoff says historically the government has used “radical” as a way of dismissing groups as “extremists,” however, and uses the two words as synonyms.

Hope Marston of the BORDC is nervous about the definition of homegrown terrorism, which is “about the ‘use, planned use, or threatened use, of force or violence’ to intimidate or coerce the government.” She says, “The definition does not make clear what force is” and could easily refer to “political activity.”

Bron Taylor, a professor at University of Florida who studies radical religion and environmental movements, questioned the government’s interpretation of violence. He spent years as an ethnographic researcher exploring the propensity of individuals within the radical environmental movement to turn to violence, a word he says defines as harm to sentient beings, not property destruction.

“There are all sorts of things that activ-

ment rights of speech and association, on the theory that preventing the growth of dangerous groups and the propagation of dangerous ideas would protect the national security and deter violence.”

Marston says, “In the 1970s when we learned of the violation in rights that the government had been doing for 40 years ... there was the ability to have public outrage.” In contrast, she says, because the erosion of civil liberties is happening during the “war on terror,” we aren’t supposed to protest anything the government does because they are ‘protecting us.’ Because we are unable to protest, it has made it more dangerous.”

MONEY FOR COPS, REPRESSION FOR FREE

The Senate version of the bill finds that the domestic threats “cannot be easily prevented through traditional Federal intelligence or law enforcement efforts, and requires the incorporation of State and local solutions.”

“That’s about joint terrorism task force making,” Franklin said. “It’s a way to create a federal slush fund so local police departments can get their hands on it. This happened in the 1960s.”

Martson agrees. “This sounds like part of the same continuum we’ve experienced in the last seven years, which is the effort to deputize local law enforcement to work with the FBI and national agencies without local accountability, as we have seen with the establishment of joint-terrorism task forces across the country,” Martson said.

Rep. Harman, in an Oct. 23 press release, stated that, the Center would “examine the social, criminal, political, psychological and economic roots of domestic terrorism.”

Professor Bron Taylor says, “This is not something that the government should have a great deal of control over, because it is so ideologically charged. We’ve had plenty of examples of administrations, this one in particular, that like to manipulate and downplay scientific findings that run at variance with their ideological and political objectives.”

“If they really want to know why we have terrorism, they are going to need to explore counter-narratives,” explained Boykoff. “When the Sept. 11 attacks occurred, one narrative to explain the situation was that there is ‘an external enemy out there who hates America.’ Other narratives, such as that perhaps U.S. foreign policy might be fueling acrimonious feelings towards the U.S., were not considered. I am skeptical that the Center for Excellence would be open to these other narratives, but rather would be regurgitating the standard narrative.”

It is unclear how researchers would gather the information.

“If you are trying to understand in the broadest sense what turns people to violence in a variety of political causes, it is not something you can do easily, and it must be studied in a serious way,” said Taylor, who has begun studying the radical environmental movement since 1989. “To find out what makes people tick, you actually have to engage with them as a human being, and that is a long process that takes patience and trust building.”

With his research experience, Taylor believes that it is absurd to think the Commission could produce a significant report in 18 months.

Anthropologist Price is also worried. “My concern is that anthropologists would again be doing secretive work for the state. This bill is going to be interpreted so narrowly. It is calling for an ideological litmus test.”

A LONG HISTORY OF DISSENT

For U.S. historian Howard Zinn, author of *A People’s History of the United States*, H.R. 1955 can be added to a long list of government policies that have been passed to target dissent in the United States.

“This is the most recent of a long series of laws passed in times of foreign policy tensions, starting with the Alien and Sedition Acts of 1798, which sent people to jail for criticizing the Adams Administration,” Zinn said in an email to *The Indypendent*. “During World War I, the Espionage Act and Sedition Act sent close to a thousand people to jail for speaking out against the war. On the eve of World War II, the Smith Act was passed, harmless enough title, but it enabled the jailing of radicals — first Trotskyists during the war and Communist party leaders after the war, for organizing literature, etc., interpreted as ‘conspiring to overthrow the government by force and violence.’”

“In all cases, the environment was one in which the government was involved in a war or Cold War or near-war situation and wanted to suppress criticism of its policies,” Zinn said.

Regardless, Zinn remains optimistic. “We should keep in mind that an act of repression by the state is a recognition of the potential of social movements and therefore we need to persist, through the repression, in order to bring about social change,” Zinn said. “We can learn to expect the repression, and not to be intimidated.”

A.K. Gupta contributed research and reporting.

‘This bill is trying to bridge the gap between those with radical dissenting views and those who engage in violent acts. It’s a form of prior restraint.’

—David Price, Professor of Anthropology

ists do that involve little or no risk of hurting people, but their actions get labeled as violent, or even worse, as acts of terrorism,” Taylor said. “For example, if 10 activists push themselves into a congressperson’s regional office, make noise, pull out files and make a scene, is that an act of terrorism? It is quite possible that the act could scare the hell out of the secretary and office workers because they don’t know these people or what they intend to do? But is that terrorism? Some people would like to frame it that way.”

THE ROLE OF THE COMMISSION

The legislation authorizes a 10-member National Commission (the Senate bill calls for 12 members) appointed by the President, the secretary of homeland security, congressional leaders and the chairpersons of both the Senate and House committees on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs.

After convening, the Commission is to submit reports at six-month intervals for 18 months to the President and Congress, stating its findings, conclusions, and legislative recommendations “for immediate and long-term countermeasures ... to prevent violent radicalization, homegrown terrorism and ideologically based violence.”

There are unsettling similarities to Cointelpro, which was investigated by a U.S. Senate select committee on intelligence activities (commonly known as the Church Committee), which convened in 1975. The Church Committee found that from 1956 to 1971, “the Bureau conducted a sophisticated vigilante operation aimed squarely at preventing the exercise of First Amend-

ment rights of speech and association, on the theory that preventing the growth of dangerous groups and the propagation of dangerous ideas would protect the national security and deter violence.”

In the last few years, many states have passed versions of the Patriot Act, while Congress has placed further checks on civil liberties with the Patriot Improvement and Reauthorization Act (2006), the Animal Enterprise Terrorism Act (2006) and the Protect America Now Act (2007), which amended the Foreign Intelligence Surveillance Act of 1978 and legalized the Bush Administration’s warrantless wiretapping.

THE BOGUS CENTER OF EXCELLENCE

H.R. 1955 gives Department of Homeland Security Secretary Michael Chertoff

the power to establish a “Center of Excellence,” a university-based research program to “bring together leading experts and researchers to conduct multidisciplinary research and education for homeland security solutions.” The Department currently has eight Centers at academic institutions across the country, strengthening what many see as a growing military-security-academic complex.

Pakistan's Coup Within a Coup

THE FATE OF CIVIL LIBERTIES UNCLEAR AS MUSHARRAF DECLARES MARTIAL LAW

BY TARIQ ALI

For anyone marinated in the history of Pakistan, the Nov. 3 decision by the military to impose a state of emergency comes as no surprise. Martial law in this country has become an antibiotic: in order to obtain the same results one has to keep doubling the doses. This was a coup within a coup.

General Pervez Musharraf ruled the country with a civilian façade, but his power base was limited to the army. And it was the army chief of staff who declared the emergency, suspended the 1973 constitution, took all non-government TV

Embassy had green-lighted the coup because Washington regarded the chief justice as a nuisance and "a Taliban sympathizer."

The regime has been confronted with a severe crisis of legitimacy that came to a head earlier this year when Musharraf's decision to suspend the chief justice, Iftikhar Hussain Chaudhry, provoked a six-month-long mass movement that forced a government retreat. Some of Chaudhry's judgments had challenged the government on key issues such as "disappeared" prisoners, harassment of women and rushed privatizations. It was feared that he might declare a president in military uniform illegal.

The struggle for a separation of powers



RUSTY ZIMMERMAN

channels off the air, jammed the mobile phone networks, surrounded the supreme court with paramilitary units, dismissed the chief justice, arrested the president of the bar association and inaugurated yet another shabby period in the country's history.

Why? They feared that a pending supreme court judgment might make it impossible for Musharraf to contest the elections. The decision to suspend the constitution was made a few weeks ago. According to good sources, contrary to what her official spokesman has been saying ("she was shocked"), Benazir Bhutto was informed and chose to leave the country before it happened. (Whether her "dramatic return" was also pre-arranged remains to be seen.)

Intoxicated by the incense of power, Bhutto might now discover that it remains as elusive as ever. If she ultimately supports the latest turn it will be an act of political suicide. If she decides to dump the general (she accused him last night of breaking his promises), she will be betraying the confidence of the U.S. State Department, which pushed her this way.

The two institutions targeted by the emergency are the judiciary and the broadcasters, many of whose correspondents supply information that politicians never give. Geo TV continued to air outside the country. Hamid Mir, one of its sharpest journalists, said yesterday that he believed the U.S.

between the state and the judiciary, which has always been weak, was of critical importance. Pakistan's judges have usually been acquiescent. Those who resisted military leaders were soon bullied out of it, so the decision of this chief justice to fight back was surprising, but extremely important, and won him enormous respect. Global media coverage of Pakistan suggests a country of generals, corrupt politicians and bearded lunatics. The struggle to reinstate the chief justice presented a different snapshot of the country.

The supreme court's declaration that the new dispensation was "illegal and unconstitutional" was heroic, and, by contrast, the hurriedly sworn-in new chief justice will be seen for what he is: a stooge of the men in uniform. If the constitution remains suspended for more than three months, Musharraf may be pushed aside by the army and a new strongman installed. Or it could be that the aim was limited to cleansing the supreme court and controlling the media. In which case a rigged January election becomes a certainty.

Whatever the case, Pakistan's long journey to the end of the night continues.

Tariq Ali is a novelist, historian, political campaigner and an editor of New Left Review. This article originally appeared in The Independent (UK). See tariqali.org.



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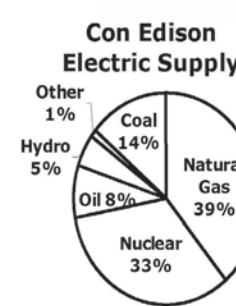
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REVIEWS

Bring on the Blood

NEW YORK CITY HORROR FILM FESTIVAL
CANTOR FILM SCHOOL, NYU
OCT 24-28, 2007

Cold, sporadic rain didn't deter ardent fans from making the pilgrimage to NYU for the sixth annual New York City Horror Film Festival. The five-day extravaganza, like a Mexican Day of the Dead celebration in celluloid, brimmed with as many laughs as gasps. Festival directors Michael Hein and Anthony Pepe selected excellent films that showed the breadth of an often pigeonholed genre. A broad range of works from Australia, California, Germany, Indonesia and New York drew as diverse a crowd of supporters.

Despite scholarly attention and critical success, horror is viewed by many as little more than porn: sadistic and voyeuristic schlock for degenerates. This year's fest presented a thriving genre that's often thought stagnant and juvenile and rampant with clichés and predictable narratives. I had shared that opinion but this fest showed me that horror is alive and kicking.

Standout films included Richard Gale's crowd-pleasing *Criticized* (which won the award for best short), a black comedy about an unhinged filmmaker who abducts and tortures a prominent critic who trashed his film. A period piece set in Texas, *Chicken-fil* is a funny and touching short about the torment of a German exchange student who gets revenge on his bullies; his fate spawns an urban legend. Matthew Byrne directed the eerie and pensive Southern gothic tale *The Wake*. The mostly pantomimed film follows a middle-aged woman who binds a boy, hangs a cabbage above his face, and starves him. Quiet and revealing, the story plunges into a surreal ending. *The Fifth* is a tightly written and acted absurd comedy about five suburban men gathering for their regular poker game, which is annoyingly interrupted by one man's job as a serial

Dance Away the Spectre of War

War Dance

BY SEAN FINE AND ANDREA NIX
ROGUES HARBOR STUDIOS, 2007

Movies chronicling the calamities of Africa abound, ranging from sensational thrillers like *Blood Diamond* to often amateurish documentaries that inspire little more than indifference. To get around such cinematographic fatalities, the makers of *War Dance*, Sean Fine and Andrea Nix, lure the viewer with a hook: the tale of impoverished but fierce children trying to make it.

Sent by the NGO Shine Global to document Uganda's 20-year civil war, the couple decided to present the conflict through the stories of three children. For most of *War Dance* we follow Nancy, Rose and Dominic, who live in the Patongo displacement camp in northern Uganda, as they prepare to compete in a nationwide dance and music competition in Kampala, the capital. The directors picked Patongo Primary School for its remote and dangerous location and because its students initially didn't stand a chance in the competition (20,000 other Ugandan schools compete in the contest, most of them from regions less affected by the war). "We were convinced that they were going to lose," Fine said.

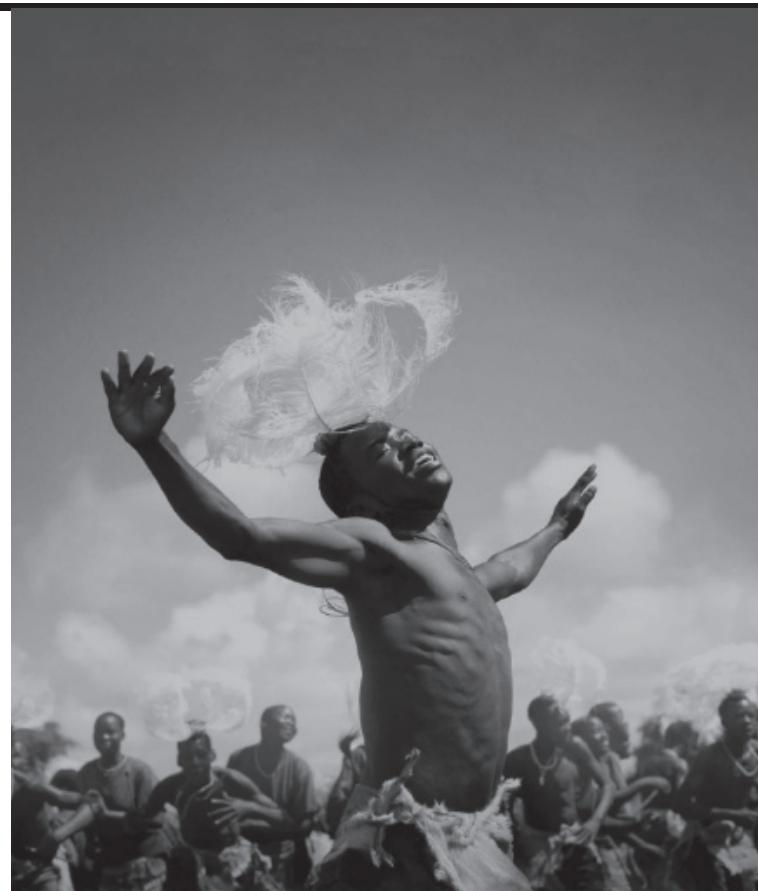
Although the documentary recalls, to varying degrees, *Little Miss Sunshine*, *Sister Act* and *Billy Elliot*, Fine says, "We didn't want to make another competition

movie. Rather it was an opportunity to see the kids leave for the first time a refugee camp in which they are literally prisoners." Nevertheless, showing Western viewers the success story of poor African orphans seems at the same time marketable and strangely obscene.

The competition is presented as a way for the children to retain their identity and agency through music and dance. But performance, though certainly therapeutic, in no way miraculously erases the trauma of being kidnapped or brutalized (in Uganda there are more than 200,000 orphans as a result of the conflict). Nancy, Rose and Dominic belong to the Acholi tribe, 500,000 of whom are currently living in government camps throughout Uganda. In one sequence, Rose vividly describes how she found her parents' heads "in a cooking pot" after the rebels left her village.

The film's greatest strength is that it gives the children a voice. Through their eyes, it presents unsentimental accounts of a conflict that directly targets youth, many of whom are abducted and forced to be soldiers or sex slaves by rebel groups like the Lord's Resistance Army and the Allied Democratic Forces. The result is a collection of eloquent narratives of war told by those who survived and escaped.

War Dance made it to the Sundance Film Festival, where it won the Documentary Directing Prize. Fine said, "A documentary should be cinematic, beautiful: We tried to emulate the look of



film while shooting in high definition." The couple's credentials working for *National Geographic* don't totally discredit them as political analysts, though they make the viewer suspicious of too many shots of sunsets and contemplative landscapes. Fine, a third-generation cameraman, said he had no problem putting the camera in people's faces, "5-6 inches from them." In fact, the children often pose in front of the camera — a problematic situation because it is ultimately unclear how much of the film is staged. The presence of the film crew creates some very special circumstances — like a mind-boggling confrontation between a rebel chief and Dominic, who is a former child soldier looking for his kidnapped brother.

Carefully crafted, the film also avoids overdramatization. The

two filmmakers (both of whom are white) are wary of both the tendency to exoticize Africa and the voyeurism of the humanitarian spectacle. Though half the ticket price goes back to non-governmental organizations, the film's sincerity doesn't necessarily translate into effectiveness; the story makes for a bitter fairy tale.

Ultimately, the well-meaning *War Dance*, unlike Theodore Braun's *Darfur Now*, avoids engaging in a straightforward political discussion, which exposes it to the risk of remaining anecdotal. The triumphant "all ends well" finale is ultimately disturbing, as it leaves aside the larger, gloomier picture: the children have won a trophy and we, the viewers, return to our cozy lives, untouched.

—CLEMENTINE GALLOT

killer. The claustrophobic short *Of Darkness*, by Gary Irwin, is a modern Lovecraftian tale about a group of suburban boys who unlock an incomprehensible evil contained within an ancient book.

Infamous hack filmmaker Uwe Boll redeemed himself with his brutally graphic Canadian feature *Seed*. A vicious serial killer unleashes a Michael Myers-like reign of terror and murder in a small town, seeking revenge on the authorities who tried to kill him. Jack Ketchum's novel, based on a true story,

serves as the basis for the horrific *The Girl Next Door*. The Greg Wilson-directed feature stunned the audience with its portrayal of 1960s suburban youngsters who, at the behest of the sadistic Aunt Ruth, spend a summer torturing a 16-year-old city girl. Frank Zagarino's gory *Blood Rails* won over the audience, reminiscent of the it's-so-bad-it's-good feel of *Evil Dead 2* and filled with convincing special effects. The feature-length story of jilted love and an albino's teen-murdering ram-

page with rail spikes ended the celebration.

Subversion, including criticism of corporations (*Alien*), anti-consumerism (*Dawn of the Dead*), empowered women (*A Nightmare on Elm Street*) and anti-fascism (*The Devil's Backbone*), is a pervasive element in the horror genre. Horror has a rich history of delving into social taboos that almost no other genre of film does as overtly or consistently. Along with staples like the fear of the metaphysical unknown (*Halfway*, *Death of a Ghost Hunter*), the New York City Horror Film Festival's films revealed more topical fears. The heinous truth that lies below the fragile and pleasant facade of decency and normalcy (*The Killer*, *The Evil Inside*, *Take Out*, *The Girl Next Door*) made strong impacts on the audience. Some films expressed the dread that we harbor of the socially oppressed (women in *Alone*, prostitutes in *Winter's Warmth*). Abduction from our normal lives — a relevant theme especially after 9/11 and popularized by *Saw* — was also evident in the fest (*Halfway*, *Stink Meat*, *Crimson Robe*). Numerous films pointed to a fear

of waning morality (*The Fifth*, *Sheepskin*, *The Strain*), especially in the face of rising consumerism (*Foet*, *Hostel*). Many horror films are modern fairy tales, serving as a moral compass, complete with fairy tales' traditional use of brutality.

As Stephen Prince wrote in *The Horror Film*, "Like other genre movies, any given horror film will convey ... ideological and social messages that are part of a certain period or historical moment." But the continued success of now-classic films (*Psycho*, *The Exorcist*) shows us that some horror is perennial, reflecting unresolved dread. Moving from distant locales and monsters (*Dracula*, *Frankenstein* and *King Kong*) to more domestic terrors (*Rabid*, *Scream*) the genre seems to parallel America's growing uncertainty with itself. Considering the current climate of preemptive war, rampant capitalism and religious fundamentalism, which challenge our notions of stability and safety, the conditions are ripe for the growing creation and appeal of horror.

—FRANK REYNOSO



The Girl Next Door



Seed

Revolution as Soap Opera

The Insurgents
DIRECTED BY SCOTT DANKO
ANGEL BABY ENTERTAINMENT, 2007

If Scott Danko's film *The Insurgents* showed even the slightest hint of humor, it could easily be mistaken for a deadpan satire of radical left-wing activism. Sadly, there's no evidence of anything funny, or even recognizably human, on display here — just soap opera-pretty actors spouting the kinds of political arguments that wouldn't even be convincing coming from fully realized characters. Ostensibly about a would-be domestic terrorist cell led by John Shea as CIA agent-turned-Chomsky-lite academic who plans to detonate a bomb stateside, the film places its supposed discourse on repressive post-9/11 U.S. politics within an unconvincing espionage framework, complete with hidden motives, double-crosses and secret affairs. The end result is like watching an episode of *Hart to Hart* guest starring the Weathermen.

Besides Shea's disillusioned lead-

er, there's an impotent Iraq War vet, the savvy seductress who's either an ex-prostitute or just easy (the film is unclear on this), the patsy who naturally isn't one, and the CIA honcho (Mary Stuart Masterson, absurdly miscast) trying to stop them. These descriptions adequately convey what we learn about the characters, who never become more than mouthpieces for what Danko wants to say about surveillance, the war, Bush, etc. Told through an aggravating fractured narrative that feels like a crutch to hide the true motives of certain characters until the end, the film devotes about half of its 80 minutes to these people in a room having empty political discussions while prepping their terrorist plot. The ideas motivating the characters never engage with the writing, so the arguments feel rhetorical, as if none of the actors were even in the same room.

It's frustrating, since some of these ideas could be shaped into something provocative within a different context. At several moments, the characters mention

how the founding fathers were essentially radical insurgents and that what's needed now is a new Revolutionary War from within — an inspired, if not terribly original, conceit that the film isn't up to following through on. At least the failure of the film to integrate

its politics into its narrative does address how difficult it is for a screenwriter to work this kind of debate into a believable scenario, dialogue and characters. This seems especially to be the case in post-9/11 filmmaking, at all levels (see *Lions for Lambs* for a simi-

lar disaster). Of course, it helps to populate your movie with real people — maybe that's why the well-regarded politically engaged films of the past six years are almost all documentaries.

—CHARLIE BASS



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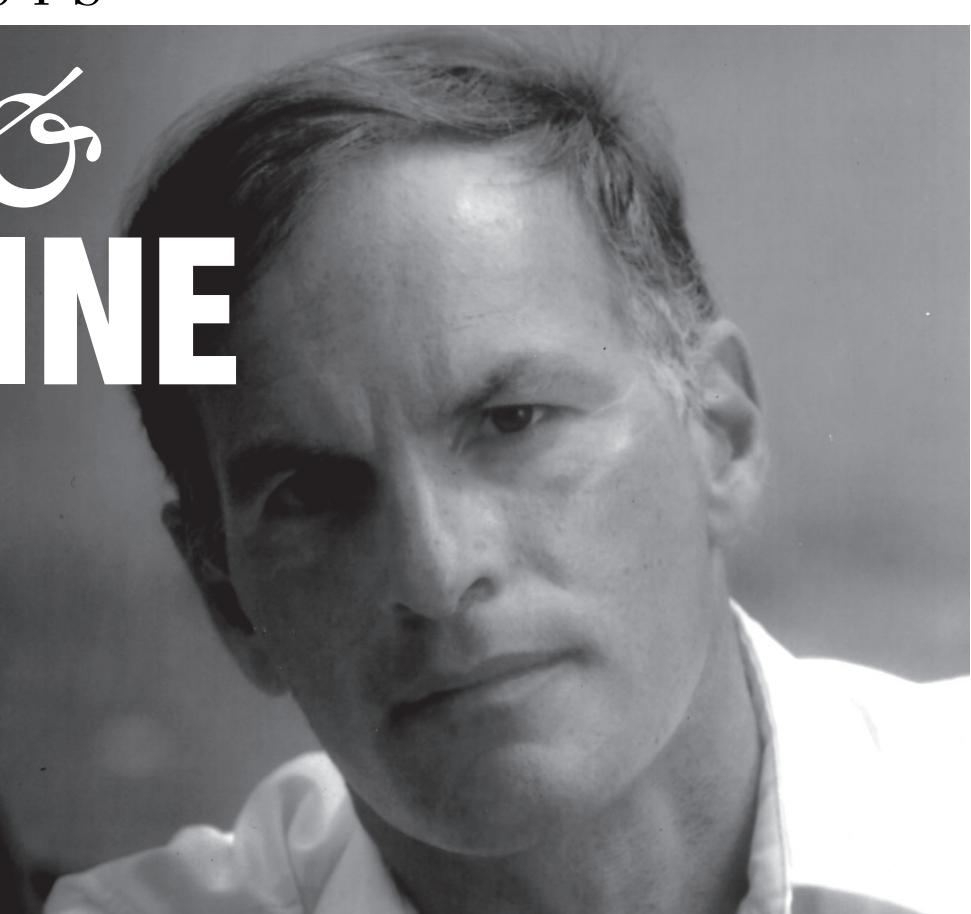
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REVIEWS



Words Of Choice
CREATED BY CINDY COOPER
TAKE TEN PRODUCTIONS, 2007

Words of Choice doesn't literally grab viewers by the shoulders and shake them, but it comes close. Based on Cindy Cooper's long-running play of the same name, the film demonstrates why women need access to abortion and other reproductive options. Its goal is clearly agitational, urging us

to step up pro-choice activism.

The beautifully acted production, reminiscent of *The Vagina Monologues*, presents 14 fast-moving and well-written skits that zoom in on a range of issues, from vicious attacks against reproductive health centers to a pregnant teenager's angst over putting her baby up for adoption.

Let's Hear It for Choice

Skillfully weaving in history, the film opens with an excerpt from Supreme Court Justice Harry Blackmun's 1973 *Roe v. Wade* decision. It then flashes forward to the contemporary anti-choice movement, zeroing in on the human impact of anti-abortion legislation.

One of the most affecting pieces is "A Father's Story." In it, Thomasina Clarke portrays a low-income man whose teenaged daughter was raped following a Fourth of July celebration at the Washington Monument. "As my daughter entered a side street," Clarke begins, "three men emerged and before my daughter could utter a cry, she was blindfolded, gagged, tied up and taken to a house where she was kept all night long." During her captivity, the teenager was repeatedly raped and beaten. The next day, she was taken back to the monument and left to find her way home. "In a short period of time," Clarke continues, "my daughter knew she was pregnant. I want to ask Congressman [Henry] Hyde what he would have done if he had been the father of that girl." (Hyde is the congressman responsible for

introducing the amendment that, since 1977, has barred Medicaid from paying for the abortions of most poor women.)

Also poignant, "What I Said to Congress" draws upon the testimony of a woman who had a late-term abortion. "Seven years ago I thought I had a perfect pregnancy," she says. But after tests revealed that the fetus had a fatal chromosomal disorder, fluid in his brain, a malformed heart and other untreatable disabilities, she chose to have an abortion. Her dilemma, of course, failed to sway Congress to allow "partial birth" abortions but the power of her words is undeniable.

But lest you think *Words of Choice* is unbearably heavy, rest assured that it is not. "SCHIPS," for one, makes fun of former Health and Human Services Secretary Tommy Thompson and his consistent elevation of fetal life. "Why does a fetus make a better patient than a pregnant woman?" he asks. "Among other things, a fetus never asks if it can bring cameras, video recorders or partners into the delivery room."

Similarly, a skit based on an article that originally ran in *The Onion*, "Taco Bell Launch," is a hilarious monologue about the Morning-After Burrito, which is eaten within 36 hours of unprotected intercourse. The spoof presents a \$1.99 treat that has consumers singing its praises.

Words of Choice also addresses anti-abortion violence ("To Hell and Back"), "right-to-life" hypocrisy ("You're On Your Own"), what life was like before Roe ("She Said — Before 1973" and "Remembering") and the feelings of sadness and guilt that some women experience after terminating a pregnancy ("Kathy/Parallel Lives").

Never glib or strident, the film offers a cogent and unapologetic defense of reproductive freedom. While adults will be both moved and angered by *Words of Choice*, its message will resonate with high school and college students. A teaching guide accompanies the DVD, making it easy for those who want to use it as an educational tool to do so.

—ELEANOR J. BADER

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Directed by Will Pomerantz & Rob Urbinati

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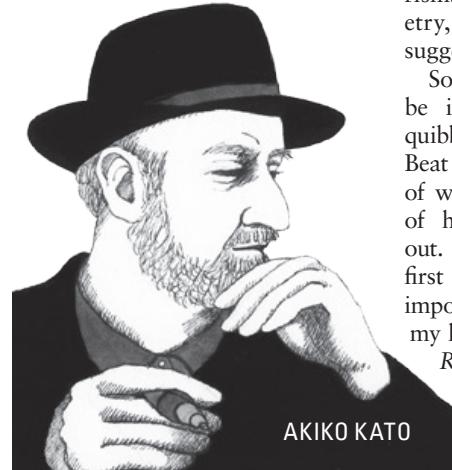
Poetry, Ferlinghetti and the Beats

Poetry as Insurgent Art
LAWRENCE FERLINGHETTI
NEW DIRECTIONS, 2007

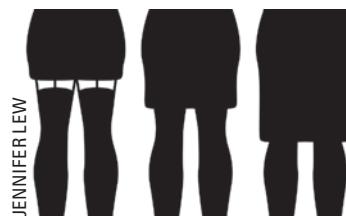
The delicacy and refinement, defiant expression and presence of poetry are piercing qualities in the extremity of contemporary events.

Lawrence Ferlinghetti speaks for poetry in his new book, *Poetry as Insurgent Art*. He offers poetry as an instrument of rebellion, as a means to invent a new language, a new truth. "I am signaling you through the flames," he writes encouragingly. "... You are Whitman, you are Poe ... you are Emily Dickinson and Edna St. Vincent Millay ..."

Of poetry itself, he says, "Poetry is the ultimate inner refuge" (accurate) and "it is Helen's straw hair in sunlight" (lovely).



AKIKO KATO



JENNIFER LEW

reader comments

Continued from Page 2

BRIGHT IDEA

Response to "Lights Out in the Jungle: Soaring Electricity Prices Compound Woes in Rural Mexico," Oct. 26

The electric bill comes every other month, but there are still gougers and [they] should be confronted. The electric company in Mexico has it the way they want. People have gotten remedy by blocking roads, etc. The only way to get through to these commercial interests is to interrupt the flow of trade.

—BELA

LET MEN BE MALE

Response to "Getting Off Misses the Mark," Oct. 26

Robert Jensen is rejecting socially constructed "masculinity" rather than his biological sex. The two are not inevitably connected. If we resort to the biological essentialism that radical feminists are usually (and usually wrongly) accused of and say that socially constructed male behavior is an inevitable consequence of possessing a penis, we aren't going to get anywhere. It needs to be recognized for

what it is, socially constructed, and we need to deconstruct the economic and social reasons for the present *The Times* (London) state of "masculinity" and the means by which it is perpetuated. This isn't "forcing men to become genderless;" it's allowing men to be male without being "masculine."

—POLLY STYRENE

ACTING LOCALLY

Response to "First Person: I'm Tired of Marching in Circles," Oct. 5

I really appreciate this article and its honesty. In my experience, these large demonstrations have been most valuable for the simple experience that I have at them, and they have rarely given me a sense that as a "movement" this "action" was going to change the

Ginsberg's "Howl;" Kerouac's prose poem to America, "October in the Railroad Earth" and essays by Kenneth Rexroth and Dore Ashton; and an excerpt from Ferlinghetti's *A Coney Island of the Mind*.

The Beats were the last group of American writers to activate the public's imagination. Today, the integrated imagination is extinct in the United States. Lamentations may on occasion be heard.

What do we have to go on now to keep us on the road? We have our memories and reminiscences. We have poetry. We have "Gaudemus Igitur" ("Let us live then and be glad"). We have Sir Gawain and the Green Knight. We have Sir Thomas Malory's *Morte Darthur*, completed in 1469, while the author was in prison.

We have the *City Lights Pocket Poets Anthology*, edited by Ferlinghetti, who writes, "From the beginning ... I had in mind ... an international, dissident, insurgent ferment ... coalescing in a truly supra-national poetic voice."

And to bring it all down to the present and extend it into the future, we have an exhibition, *Beatific Soul: Jack Kerouac on the Road*, through March 16, 2008, at the New York Public Library (Fifth Avenue and 42nd Street). The library program, Fall 2007/Winter 2008, notes, "He was BEAT — the root, the soul of Beatific."

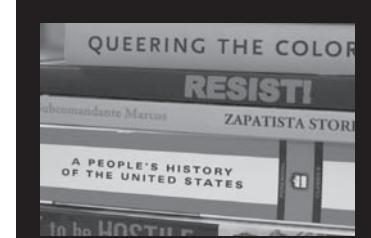
—DONALD PANETH

world directly. It doesn't surprise me that people go to D.C. to protest the war; I almost felt like going myself. It also doesn't surprise me that once there, people ask, "Just what are we doing here?" Our society doesn't change in response to marches; it's a reality that is difficult to accept sometimes — especially during a march that one may have energy invested in and expectations of. But, as this writer exhibits, PEOPLE change in marches. My guess is that for every one of you in D.C. that day, there were a thousand of us here in our towns, going about our work to bridle capitalism and end war. Very few demonstrations actually represent the essence of the movement they purport to give voice to. Many folk gave up on the mass demo thing and are in their little towns, doing the little changes that will, with time, bring us back together again on a regional/national/global scale, and the "movement" will actually move. Cheers on the honest observations, and keep on!

—PILLAR



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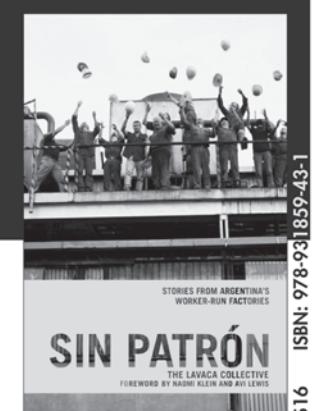
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